



Teams, scheduling changes help focus care on patients

The reasons we visit the doctor's office are many. But what we need from the experience is pretty universal in the end: service, responsiveness, and help safeguarding our health.

The idea of care focused on what patients need is central to an Oregon initiative aimed this year at transforming the state's care system. La Clinica was designated a Patient Centered Primary Care Home under the initiative, and medical and behavioral health staffs are reorganizing into teams to meet the guidelines of the new approach.

What will this mean for patients? Ultimately, easier access to appointments, including same-day spots for immediate needs and waits of no more than two weeks for any appointment. Patients will be served by a team of care experts rather than a single primary-care provider, and the team will communicate regularly with patients. And patients with chronic conditions—diabetes, high blood pressure, and the like—will notice they can access extra support, including home visits and the help of behavioral health coaches to reach their goals.

La Clinica also expects to have an increased partnership with area hospitals and specialty providers in the future, said Tara Kirk, who is coordinating the changes for the organization. "As healthcare providers we are all in this together, all fighting for the best care delivery system for our patients, and that is really powerful," she said

See photos of care team members and learn more about how they can help at www.laclinicahealth.org/teams.



Project aims to rein in use through personal touch

For lots of patients, a visit to the doctor's office is infrequent and a trip to the emergency room maybe a once-in-a-lifetime event. That's not the case for everyone, however.

Some find themselves using the healthcare system far more than others, said Audra Saunders, a new La Clinica outreach worker whose job is to identify patients who use services frequently and intervene, offering support and education in the office or outside it.

She is part of a pilot project developed with managed care organization CareOregon and a group of healthcare providers. It aims to rein in the costs associated with such encounters and improve patient health by providing care that is consistent, coordinated and able to meet the patient's real need.

"I find a lot of patients just open up and share," she said. "They tend to divulge a lot of information about what's going on in their lives."

One man confided that he thought he had depression but didn't want to talk with his provider directly about it. Would she do it for him? Another is a diabetic who recently had foot surgery. He lives with his elderly parents and has trouble controlling his diet. She's working to help him control his eating habits.

Audra brings a background in social services to the job. She worked at a relief nursery in Albany, and while a student at Oregon State University in Corvallis, she developed programs that helped students with expenses such as rent and utilities and with food costs.



New standards will help guide our work

How are we doing? That's a question we're going to be asking of ourselves a lot in coming months.

La Clinica has a new set of 14 service standards that the organization's employees are using to guide their work with patients, community partners, and even each other. The statements pledge a commitment to service, to quality, to respect and partnership with the people served by our organization.

The list grew from a process started more than a year ago, when the organization began talking with patients about their experiences with health care. The most satisfied related to La Clinica staff in a personal way, for example: "My life is better and better, and I feel like it's because of the help of the medical people who are taking care of me."

A growing body of research indicates that many patients do have better outcomes when they establish strong bonds with the people who provide their care.

"Our staff was already highly service oriented," said La Clinica CEO Brenda Johnson. "Taking this additional step of putting standards in writing allows us to turn that orientation part of our organization's culture. We're excited about the possibilities of this."

To read all 14 statements, visit www.laclinicahealth.org/service. Or stop by a La Clinica health center and ask to see the service standards list.



Open house celebrates newest care sites

Patients are receiving care this summer at La Clinica's two newest sites—the East Medford Dental Clinic and the La Clinica Mobile Health Center—after the organization celebrated the launch of both in May with an open house at the dental clinic.

About 120 guests (including, at right, board member Jerry Taylor and his wife, Jeanne, with Chief Financial Officer Angelica Ruppe) toured the dental clinic and the mobile center and learned about the critical services both are providing in the community. We are deeply grateful for the support of the community and from partners who have helped make these projects reality.

Community members can find the mobile center's schedule at www.laclinicahealth.org/mobile or learn more at 541-535-6239. Make appointments at the dental clinic by calling 541-512-3900.



Meeting the need

- 96,134 people in Jackson County lack dental insurance or have insurance that is not readily acceptable or that limits care. This is nearly half of all county residents.
- Our mobile center has provided care to 316 medical patients since it opened in January and care to 43 dental patients since dental service started in mid March. This service is specifically for people who are unable to visit our other health centers for care.

